

DNR Wild Rice Advisory Committee Meeting, 10:00 a.m. 7/30/2019

UW Trout Lake Station, Boulder Junction, WI

Attendance: Cathie Erickson (Wisconsin Lakes Association), Brian Glenzinski (Ducks Unlimited), Bridget Olson (USFWS), Lisa David (GLIFWC), Bob Willging (USDA), Jon Robideaux (USDA), Chris Spaight (WDNR), Kelly Crotty (WDNR), Jenna Malinowski (WDNR), Douglas Kurtzweil (WCC), Dave Kafura (WDNR), Keith Patrick (WDNR), Jason Fleener (WDNR), Kevin Gauthier (WDNR), Sara Comstock (WDNR), Bruce Ross (WWA), Carroll Schaal (WDNR), James Yach (WDNR), Susan Knight (UW Trout Lake Station)

- Meeting opened with welcome from UW Trout Lake Station Director
- Introductions around the table
- Request for agenda repair items
- Put on next meeting agenda: public vs private bed wild rice harvesting rights. Check with DNR Legal Services staff on past Legal analysis on the issue.

- 2018 ricing season recap (Lisa David)– survey sent out to tribal and non-tribal ricers
 - Any correlation with ergot and brown spot?
 - Should we add a question about ergot to the survey?

- Hunter/ricer interaction – does anyone put out educational signs (etc.) about the mixed use of the water body resource?
 - Signs should be put out about the concurrent hunting/ricing season
 - Could Go Wild send out notifications to ricers and early season hunters?
 - WWA would be glad to put an informational section in their newsletter/web
 - We could also put informational info about avoiding running it over
 - DNR social media is another option
 - DNR wild rice webpage
 - GovDelivery list

- DNR Wild Rice Strategic Analysis (SA) update
 - This document lays out all issues related to wild rice management
 - It does not provide recommendations
 - A draft has been completed by the Department (approximately 100 pages) and is being reviewed within DNR
 - When draft is ready, it will go out to the committee, GLIFWC and tribes of Wisconsin for review
 - Following committee and tribal review the draft may be updated further, then will go out for public review

- 2019 outlook
 - Turtle Lake – not looking good; downstream has an abundance may be better next year
 - Most water bodies are very high this year
 - Bear lake – looking good

- High water has been consistent (a better start for rice than high water during floating leaf stage)
 - Despite all the storms in the northwest we may still have a decent ricing season
 - Little Rice lake Forest co – has good rice beds
 - Wabikon – has translucent rice after leafing stage; otherwise looks like it is starting out better than in other years
- Peter David is flying and taking aerial photos of wild rice lakes
 - This information will be put on GLIFWC's website
 - Helps give an idea of what conditions are for the year
- Conservation Congress resolution
 - It was brought forward by a resident in Bayfield Co
 - Is tribal harvest limited to residents of WI?
 - No, if you are an enrolled member of the Chippewa tribe you have treaty rights
 - There is a gap in the data without the 65+ being license purchasers
 - Why do we stop giving permits beyond 65? We could give free permits to allow us to continue obtaining data.
 - Statutory authority doesn't exist to require a permit for ricers 65+
 - Could GLIFWC host a survey on their website? Or the State?
 - Voluntary web-based surveys won't be able to measure a response rate, whereas the mail-in survey does, which can extrapolate data for harvest estimates.
 - the number of surveys sent out will not be known, but will be based on the number of people who obtained a state ricing license or tribal ricing authorization
 - Could we give finishers surveys to hand out? Or have a sign-up list to receive surveys?
 - Both a free (65+) and non-resident licenses would need to go through the legislature
 - Does GLIFWC monitor Minnesota's non-tribal licenses?
 - No, they do it differently
 - Some may be concerned about opening harvest to non-residents
 - WI only has wild rice really in the top 1/3 of the state
 - It could function like Minnesota's non-resident trapping – only landowners can purchase a license
 - It's not really going to hit very hard (only 5% of non-resident licenses sold in Minnesota consist of non-residents)
 - People will still be going the easiest route from dock to open water, education may help some to prevent damage to rice beds
 - In the resolution it was not clear if the 3-day license would be 1 license a year, or allow multiple -day license purchases throughout the season
 - Guiding for ricing of non-residents could impact rice beds
 - Are we supporting it as written? Or are we supporting in general at some point in the future have non-resident license available?
 - Committee supports the exploratory process, and supports it going to the spring hearings to gauge public interest

- A one-time 3-day license suggested
 - If we want to increase revenue, don't we want to allow multiple purchases of 3-day licenses
 - Overall, wild rice licenses generate relatively little revenue to the department, and non-resident related revenues would be pretty insignificant. The motivation behind the resolution is not for revenue generation.
 - What type of issue is this: resource, budget, or stewardship?
 - It was a citizen resolution, why would we want to limit purchases to one time, why not let the citizens sort it out?
 - The concept is supported, but the committee would like to see where it goes through the Conservation Congress process before further input is provided.
- 2019 beaver control – Bob Willging and Jason Fleener
 - Much of the service is survey work, if a lake needs beaver or dams removed, they will
 - The last 2-3 years there has been a rise in effort to keep more lakes in good rice condition
 - DNR has been funding this effort with WI Waterfowl Stamp (WS) funding in the past, but funding was not received for the next biennium
 - DNR recognizes the importance of this work and will be looking to the segregated funds and other areas to continue this cooperative work
 - This initiative can again compete for WS funds during the next cycle
- Proposed modifications to date-regulated lakes (Background information provided by Lisa David in a hand-out)
 - A subset of wild rice lakes in WI are date-regulated, meaning you can only start ricing once a date is mutually agreed upon by the state and the local rice chief, and the lake is posted at least 24 hours in advance.
 - This list first occurred in 1964 and has not been changed since 1985, except for Lake Noquebay outside of the Ceded Territory
 - It is illegal to harvest on these lakes before they have been opened
 - The tribes have endorsed a proposal at the previous Joint State/Tribal rice meeting, which retains, removes and adds lakes to the current list in administrative code.
 - With date-regulation, people expect that there will be rice there and people tend to hit these lakes hard.
 - Roughly half of the lakes on the list no longer support rice or insignificant amounts of rice that are not worth harvesting.
 - Date-regulation is a historical and culturally important practice in Wisconsin
 - Reducing the number of date-regulated lakes will make it easier on the rice chiefs to be more accurate on opening dates, and save time and money to drive to multiple lakes many times
 - How long would it take for the proposal to be implemented?
 - At least 2-3 years through the State's administrative rules process

- Date-regulation is also providing a customer service to help people know when other waters should be starting to ripen, as shown in recent wild rice harvest survey polls
- 4 lakes are suggested to be added by tribes as they tend to be hit harder, and often prematurely
- Removing lakes with the wrong names/non-existent, no public access points, or no rice beds for many years
- Is there some way to monitor the biological side of things for date regulated and not regulated?
 - Very difficult to compare wild rice production between date-regulated and non-date-regulated lakes due to the many variables that affect rice production between water bodies
- If this document is living, we can change the lake list in the future
 - Would need to look into wording of how the administrative rules are created/amended, but the department may not have that kind of flexibility
- Committee members suggested taking votes to determine if the committee endorses the proposed updated date-regulation package by the tribes. The committee's recommendation will be sent to DNR's Administration, who will consider it before the Department continues to engage with GLIFWC and tribes on the next steps in the process.
 - Doug – support
 - Bridget – support
 - Jason – support
 - Chris – support
 - Kelly – support
 - Jenna – support, she did reach out to other local biologists and got no input one way or another (majority didn't say anything at all, others were indifferent)
 - Carroll – support, make it a living document
 - Bruce – support
 - Dave – support
 - Keith – support
 - Kevin – support
 - Cathie – support
 - Brian – support
 - Lisa - support
- Discuss with the tribes on how frequently this needs to be revisited
- Could there be a question on the harvest survey about was a person at a lake on opening day, the second day... etc.? Would measure opening day harvest pressure.
- Could volunteers count cars, people...? To get a sense of the number of people ricing
- Coordination of seeding requests
 - DU – has been looking for local seed, but everything recent has been from Minnesota
 - Are there ways for people (anyone) to buy green wild rice?
 - Nurseries, wild rice dealers, processors, etc.

- Updated wild rice brochure – Lisa David
 - It is being updated and sent to the printers for this season; it will also be on the GLIFWC website
 - It covers the upper Midwest area
- Project updates
 - Spur lake – hasn't had rice for many years. It has been used as a climate adaptation study, what can be done to reduce water level and increase rice.
 - Lower Steve Creek Flowage – dam failure analysis indicated spillway capacity is insufficient and Department must take action. Special PR money allocated for renovation of the dam. Rice has been declining on the flowage for many years, with better water control and management capability there will hopefully be an increase in rice.
 - Hay Meadow Flowage and Pat Shay Lake (Forest Co.) – Waterfowl Stamp funded project that seeded wild rice by Wisconsin Waterfowl Association and local high school.
 - Green Bay West Shores – 19 sites have observed presence of wild rice. Many of these may not be long term viable sites. Seeding may stop in some areas for the time being, work on reducing wave action, then continue with seeding/restoration efforts.
 - Little Bear Flowage – no wild rice, water control structure has been compromised, and water has been flowing through auxiliary spillway. Wild rice not present due to the high-water level the dam has created. Project is sitting waiting for a funding source to completely remove or replace it with another water control structure. A study is necessary to evaluate repair options. Lac du Flambeau tribe has offered support.
 - Do the DNR's BMPs for water quality go as far as protecting wild rice waters?
 - Many lakes containing rice designated as Areas of Special Natural Resource Interest (ASNRI), which offers a level of protection through permitting processes
 - No statewide water quality standards specific to rice
- Meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.